

Human versus nature in visual arts

The artistic climate in Aruba has changed considerably during the last thirty years. Initially, art was a form of leisure activity for amateurs and handcrafters or part of a broader cultural education for the elite. The sixties produced a change, and exhibitions were organized with some regularity.

In the early seventies, "ARTE POPULAR" was organized by the energetic Hubert Booi, then head of the national Bureau of Culture and Education. High-quality visual art of mature artists mingled with works by those just starting out. A complete mixture of art and crafts was presented, stimulating the interest of a broad section of the population.

At the same time, the first scholarship students were returning from their professional artistic training abroad. Most found teaching jobs in local schools or in a newly created cultural sector. Aruba was awakening and becoming aware of the necessity of recognizing its local artists, who in return found important sources of inspiration in the island's flora and fauna, natural scenery, soil, archaeological past, and in the Caribbean Sea.

In the late seventies and early eighties, Aruba began participating in several regional exhibitions, such as Carifestas and Biennials. Nothing would stop this art-minded roller-coaster. The Aruban artist had so much to offer. Each was clearly evolving into a strong personality with recognizable modern contemporary characteristics, not afraid to experiment or to explore new horizons.

The nineties brought new fresh young Aruban artists with minds of their own — some very eclectic and others forever inventive, some continuously in search of idiosyncratic awareness and others combining symbolism with realism. "Mixed media" and "installations" became common terms, and Aruban art varied from small and intimate to huge and overpowering.

The Centrale Bank van Aruba is proud to introduce to you six of Aruba's gifted artists, all of whom are part of the above-mentioned historical evolution and have enriched this annual report with their skills and vision. Each artist is represented by a typical work, accompanied by information on the contents of the artwork and the artist.

These paintings enable us not only to appreciate, but also feel and understand the creative world of human versus nature, where painting as a means of expression is a refuge. Hopefully, this unique presentation contributes to bringing art closer to our homes, hearts and understanding.

Nigel Matthew (art teacher/artist)
